United Nations A/C.4/64/SR.10

General Assembly
Sixty-fourth session

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 15 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)
later: Mr. Valladores (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Honduras)
later: Mr. Al-Nasser (Chairperson) ..... (Qatar)

Contents

Agenda item 34: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

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Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

09-56321 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 34: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/64/21 and 262)

1. **Mr. Elsherbini** (Egypt) said that the role of information and communications technology had become pivotal in fashioning global public opinion, in dealing with international crises and in decision-making. In consequence, the United Nations had greater responsibility than ever for promoting international cooperation with a view to the establishment of a more just and objective world information order.

2. He called on the Department of Public Information to continue its efforts to develop and update the United Nations information message and disseminate it around the world, so as to make it possible to deal adequately with the challenges of the times, which affected developing and least developed countries in particular. In that connection, he reaffirmed the importance of multilingualism and achieving the desired balance between the six official languages. It was important also to diversify the media used and to mix the new with the traditional with a view to achieving the broadest outreach possible, bringing peoples together and fostering dialogue and understanding between cultures and civilizations.

3. He urged the Department to continue to improve the quality and content of its coverage so as to enhance regional and local understanding of the work of the Organization; improve the integration between the work of Headquarters and that of information centres around the world; and ensure professional development for staff. In that context his delegation reiterated its call for strengthening the role of the main information centres in Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria and supporting the integration of joint action among them and with centres in neighbouring countries. It also called for expansion of the Organization's information structure in the various geographic regions and improvement of the level of the work carried out, especially in developing and least developed countries and conflict zones.

4. His delegation encouraged the Department to continue its focus on programmes and activities relating to the achievement of economic and social development by Member States, especially in Africa, and called upon it to continue its information programme on the Palestinian issue, reporting the suffering of the Palestinian people under the occupation and the violations of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law to which they were subjected by the Israeli occupying authority. He reaffirmed the importance of the Department's role, through its all-inclusive, objective information service, in promoting a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and an end to Israeli occupation of Arab lands.

5. **Mr. Shafkat** (Pakistan) said that at a critical time of global polarization and misunderstandings, the Department of Public Information must ensure that information and communications were put to use to serve as a bridge between cultures and religions. It must also create better awareness of issues of global importance like climate change, peace and security, development and United Nations reform; and there should be parity among all official languages in the communication of the United Nations messages. The Department had brought into sharp focus the achievements and challenges faced by the United Nations, and in that work, the importance of its close cooperation with other substantive departments, especially through its strategic communications services, could not be overemphasized.

6. Pakistan attached high priority to the work of the United Nations information centres around the world. It hoped that the Department would continue to strengthen those centres and that their financial and staff requirements would be met.

7. Pakistan, which was committed to freedom of expression and a free media, was among the few countries where the Government's policies had created an enabling environment for the private sector as the engine of growth for electronic media. As a result, there had been a surge in private media: over 20 television channels and almost 65 radio stations aired independent programming; almost 300 dailies, periodicals and magazines were being published; and 14 news agencies catered to media needs.

8. The countries with a monopoly on information and communications technology were influencing world affairs by promoting their own values in the many countries with limited access to technology. The Committee on Information had stressed the need to meet the technology requirements of developing countries. Journalists from all countries should be given equitable access to the United Nations and to the

Secretary-General. His delegation proposed that each mission should be issued an additional media pass during the high-level segment of the General Assembly to permit effective reporting.

9. *Mr. Valladores (Honduras), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

10. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that freedom of speech was a pillar of democracy on which all human rights and fundamental freedoms depended. Freedom of expression that did not offend against beliefs, religions or public decency were guaranteed by constitutions and international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. World Press Day, organized every year by the Department of Public Information, was a reminder of the importance of freedom of expression to human rights and fundamental freedoms and to the advancement of societies.

11. In order for information to achieve its purpose, it was essential to narrow the digital gap between developed and developing countries by using the advances made in information technology and communications. If the international community was intent on establishing a new and more balanced world information and communication order in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/182, what was needed was cooperation with a view to developing information and communications infrastructure and human resources in developing countries.

12. While the easy flow of information in developing countries required the use of modern equipment, traditional media such as radio and the press must not be neglected, for they were a major source of information for the peoples of those countries. The United Nations information centres were a fount of information on United Nations activities and achievements and must therefore be well supplied with publications and other materials.

13. The Department deserved praise for its commitment to the broadest outreach possible and its untiring efforts in covering the many issues of concern to the Organization, which made it the resounding voice of the United Nations. There was consequently a need for equality among the six official languages in all information matters. He hoped that the Department would continue its activities, backed by the General Assembly, in the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine, including the training programme for Palestinian journalists, until an equitable resolution of that question was achieved.

14. **Mr. Al-Aqil** (Saudi Arabia) said that, given the enormous influence of modern media, the need for transparency, accuracy and impartiality in the role of the Department of Public Information, as the voice of the United Nations, was more important than ever, particularly as the unlimited flow of information on the Internet and via satellite had created an enormous gap between advanced countries and developing countries, whose lack of resources prevented their access to modern information technology. Saudi Arabia commended the important role played by the United Nations through the Department in solving growing global problems and challenges and focusing on the main priorities, thus helping the international community to gain a better understanding of emerging issues. In the context of the dialogue of cultures and religions, Saudi Arabia had called for the creation of "healthy climates" for the spread of values of dialogue, tolerance and moderation among cultures and peoples.

15. His country's experience in combating terrorism through an approach based on dialogue and ideas had been lauded around the world and adopted by some major countries. In 2005, the Kingdom had held a counter-terrorism conference attended by experts from over 60 countries. The conference had adopted the Riyadh Declaration, which affirmed a united international will to combat terrorism and extremism, and culminated in a call by King Abdullah for the creation of an international counter-terrorism centre under United Nations auspices, which, it was hoped, would soon become a reality.

16. Greater resources should be allocated to achieving full equality among the languages of the United Nations and eliminating the disparity between the Organization's web sites in the six official languages. A global media code of ethics should be drafted to define appropriate legal and moral standards of objectivity, transparency and credibility in reporting and guarantee the safety of persons working in the media, especially in conflict zones. Saudi Arabia hoped that, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions, the Department would devote greater attention to Middle East issues and in particular the suffering of the Palestinian people. His delegation expressed appreciation to the Committee on Information for its efforts to achieve greater media freedom without clashing with traditional and cultural values.

17. **Mr. Kim** Chol Min (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that information and communications technologies, which played an important role in promoting social development and human welfare, were still controlled by a handful of developed countries, so that the developing countries never enjoyed the benefits. Moreover, certain countries misused the modern tools to achieve their sinister purposes — promoting their own values, disseminating distorted information, causing social chaos and even instigating the overthrow of Governments — rather than making them available to promote world peace, prosperity and justice. A typical example was "Radio Free Asia", operated by the United States of America to target countries including his own: the United States continued to wage large-scale psychological warfare aimed at bringing down his Government, in outrageous violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

18. It should therefore be a priority to establish a just new world information and communication order based on the principles of respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, justice and objectivity, and at the service of world peace and security, health, social development and sustainable development. The United Nations and developed countries should assist developing countries in their efforts to improve their information and communications infrastructures and also take measures to enhance international cooperation and ensure free access to and transfer of the necessary technology and expertise. His Government, despite the stifling economic embargo imposed by hostile forces, had managed to improve its information and communications infrastructure, and was using information in the service of nation-building.

19. **Mr. Bonkoungou** (Burkina Faso) observed that since information was a strategic United Nations tool for making the Organization better known to the wider world public, the plans for the revitalization of the Department of Public Information and the improvement of its services should be fully implemented. The Department had done well to give priority to issues of peace, development, human rights, climate change and the Millennium Development Goals. However, the efforts to ensure a more balanced distribution of information in the six official languages should continue to be pursued. His delegation commended the steps taken to better integrate the new technologies into the Department's communications strategies, which should foster international cooperation in reducing the digital divide by giving the developing countries better access to technology.

20. Although clearly the Department could not remain on the sidelines of new developments in the area of information and communications, it could not ignore the needs of the people in developing countries who had no access to the modern tools and continued to rely on traditional media like the press, radio and television for their information. The international community must give whatever assistance was needed to strengthen the human and technological resources of the public and private media in those countries. Regional, South-South and North-South cooperation were crucial to bringing about a reduction of the digital divide.

21. The network of United Nations information centres had proven its value in giving the people of developing countries access to information. Unfortunately, however, insufficient resources were handicapping a number of the centres including the regional information centre in Ouagadougou, which the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information had visited earlier in the year. The Ouagadougou centre worked with national radio and television in four countries — Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad — and was raising awareness of common concerns such as drug trafficking, transborder crime, child trafficking and child labour, and climate issues. The Department of Public Information must give the centre additional support so that it could keep doing its invaluable work.

22. **Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) commended the Department of Public Information on the constructive information policies and reforms it had adopted to keep up with rapid developments in the field of information and communications. He stressed that information must not be used for control or for imposing a particular culture or ideology, but for dialogue and communication among peoples and cultures. Efforts must be continued to strengthen multilingualism and fair treatment for all six official United Nations languages in all the Department's activities. He also called on the Department to redouble its efforts to help developing countries improve their information institutions, especially in the areas of training and publication, in order to help close the digital divide.

23. Efforts should be continued to protect journalists and news correspondents and to facilitate the free and

effective performance of their work. All aggression against them must be condemned.

24. He praised the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its information-dissemination efforts in developing countries. The Department of Public Information should be encouraged to continue to report on the Palestinian-Israeli question and give proper coverage to the ongoing brutal Israeli aggression against the occupied Palestinian people.

25. The freedom of expression and opinion provided for by Kuwait's Constitution had contributed to the development of Kuwait's media institutions, as attested by many States and non-governmental organizations.

26. **Mr. Bakhtin** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation was encouraged by the efforts of the Department of Public Information to highlight United Nations priority issues in the areas of peace and security, non-proliferation and disarmament, the Millennium Development Goals, human rights, climate change, the world financial and economic crisis, the global food crisis and the influenza A (H1N1) virus. It welcomed the ongoing rationalization of the work of the United Nations information centres, including the strategic redeployment of resources, expanded use of the latest information and communications technology and enhanced cooperation at the regional level. It was only by promptly and effectively countering misinformation about the work of the United Nations that the Department and its network of information centres could improve the Organization's public image.

27. His delegation welcomed the Department's efforts to develop partnerships with non-governmental and non-profit organizations through regular briefings and the holding of the annual conference for NGOs. It was also pleased to note that the Department had become more receptive to the opinions of Member States and information centres with regard to the selection of candidates for participation in those events. He thanked the Secretary-General for his participation in the launch of a lecture series in Moscow in March 2009, the aim of which had been to create and disseminate video recordings of lectures by leading political and public figures in the six official languages of the United Nations. His delegation also attached great importance to the Department's efforts to raise awareness of the Organization's work among young people. In that connection, he highlighted the success of the tenth Model United Nations held in Moscow in April 2009, which had been attended by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.

28. Noting that the Department was expanding United Nations news, radio and Internet services in all the official languages, he said that all types of Russian language coverage of the work of the United Nations should be strengthened. The United Nations News Centre in Russian was one of the most reliable sources of information about the Organization's work and was increasingly important in the light of the growing number of Internet users in the Russian Federation. It also served to strengthen the position of the Russian language in the United Nations, in line with the principle of multilingualism. His delegation was therefore concerned that it remained a pilot project with minimal resources and requested the Under-Secretary-General to ensure its continuity and to provide information about the prospects for enhancing it.

29. His delegation was pleased to note the progress made in the implementation of the principle of multilingualism on the United Nations website, although much remained to be done with regard to the Internet portals of other entities in the United Nations system. It also welcomed the steps taken to modernize further the work of United Nations Radio and Television, to develop webcasting and to catalogue and digitize the Organization's photographic and video archives.

30. In November 2009 the first Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety would take place in Moscow, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 62/244. Its aim would be to expand international cooperation with regard to road safety and to encourage national efforts to reduce the number of road accidents. The Conference would also call upon the General Assembly to declare 2010-2020 the decade of action for road safety. His delegation would appreciate the Department's involvement in publicizing the work of the Conference.

31. Welcoming the continued efforts to enhance the work of the Department's field offices, including through the use of new information technology, he said that the United Nations Information Centre in Moscow carried out information and awareness-raising activities both within the Russian Federation and throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States on topics such as the accessibility of new information and

communications technology to disabled persons, corporate social responsibility in the current crisis, human rights and Holocaust remembrance. The Russian-language service of United Nations Radio also deserved recognition for the quality of its work and its continued collaboration with the major Russian radio station Voice of Russia. However, inequality in access to new information and communications technology persisted. He reiterated his delegation's commitment to the principle of access for all without exception to the benefits of the global information society, so as to ensure freedom of expression and equal participation for all.

32. In 2009 the fourth International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust had taken place. His delegation was pleased to note that representatives of Russian-speaking veterans' associations had participated in the events organized by the Department. Commemoration of the Holocaust would be incomplete without a mention of the liberators, including the Soviet troops that had liberated the Auschwitz camp. In the events it organized to commemorate the Holocaust, the Department should ensure that objective and accurate information was included on the outcome of the Second World War. May 2010 would mark the sixty-fifth anniversary of the victory of the anti-Hitler coalition in the Second World War, which had led to the birth of the United Nations. Therefore, all attempts to rewrite history and to rehabilitate former Nazis should be viewed as violations of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles on which it was based.

33. **Ms. Khan** (Bangladesh), while welcoming the coverage of United Nations peacekeeping operations in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/262), said that the heroic story of those operations remained largely untold. As a major troop-contributing country with almost 10,000 peacekeepers currently serving in various peace operations, Bangladesh was keen to see that that story reflected the role of individual countries and the sacrifice of their soldiers. Yet she did not recall seeing any publication or documentary of the Department of Public Information highlighting the enormous sacrifice that Bangladesh had suffered with the deaths of as many as 100 of its peacekeepers from 32 missions over the years. Such contributions must be recorded for today's youth and tomorrow's leaders, and she pledged her country's support to assist the Department as best it could.

34. Bangladesh welcomed the coverage of climate change but, as one of the low-lying countries that was under threat, urged the Department to look at the human dimension of the problems facing coastal countries and to tell that story as it unfolded. There too she pledged her country's support for the Department and its audio-visual units.

35. At the previous session of the General Assembly, her delegation had offered assistance in raising awareness of Mother Language Day. Unfortunately, the Department had either relegated it to the bottom of its priorities for 2009 or abolished it altogether, the only sign being a message from the Department on Mother Language Day 2009. Accordingly, she reiterated her country's offer to explain the background to that Day and peoples' collective journey to promote their respective mother languages.

36. In conclusion, she welcomed the Department's use of new media and social networking and called for increased human and financial resources for the United Nations Information Centres, particularly in the least developed countries. The Dhaka centre had emerged as a key player in promoting the Organization's ideals and priorities, including the Millennium Development Goals. She urged the Department to send a video team to record the countrywide rally in support of the MDGs to be led by the Bangladeshi Parliament in October 2009, at which the Prime Minister would be the guest of honour.

37. **Mr. Maboundou** (Congo) said that the Department of Public Information, which occupied a central position in the Organization, must be guided by transparency, fairness, impartiality and consistency in publicizing its messages. It must apprise the public of the world of the problems facing the international community and of the proper responses to those problems. The Department had acquitted itself well of those tasks. However, it should be given a clearer mandate and adequate financing to make it more operational and more competitive. There must also be full collaboration between the Department and the Committee on Information as they went about their respective tasks.

38. The vitally important role played by the United Nations information centres, as the most direct vehicles of communication with world opinion, should be recognized. They were the best way of reaching the widest possible public, particularly in the developing

countries, and of making United Nations action more visible and understandable. Congo urged the centres to disseminate more information on the United Nations peacekeeping operations and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It supported the request made by a majority of the members of the Committee on Information for the establishment of a United Nations information centre in Luanda, Angola, for Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa.

39. The observance of World Press Freedom Day was significant because it effectively highlighted the right to freedom of expression. Congo also welcomed the observance in September 2009 of the International Day of Peace, at the behest of the Department of Public Information, on the theme of disarmament. The aim had been to mobilize public opinion about the need to free the world of the danger of nuclear weapons. Both the Department and the Committee on Information were doing good work in promoting international peace and security.

40. Multilingualism and the parity of the six official United Nations languages must be maintained in all the activities of the Organization, including communications to the Committee on Information. Information played a paramount role in furthering the dialogue between cultures and religions in order to find urgent solutions to armed conflict and terrorism. Both the Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information must continue to work with UNESCO in that regard.

41. His delegation was deeply concerned about the imbalanced access to the new information and communications technologies and believed that there was an urgent need to help the developing countries catch up. With the help of its development partners, his Government had for the past two years been setting up a huge undersea fibre-optic telecommunications project, which should shortly allow even the most remote Congolese population centres to fall into step with globalization. Building on the General Assembly's endorsement of the World Summit on the Information Society in resolution 60/252, the Department of Public Information must highlight the advantages that the use of the Internet and other information and communications technologies could offer societies and economies, and suggest means of bridging the digital divide.

42. **Mr. Cujba** (Moldova) commended the Department of Public Information for its efforts to promote global awareness and mobilize support for the Organization's goals. His delegation welcomed the actions taken by the Department to increase its efficiency, including through the targeted delivery of information and the building of partnerships with civil society. It hoped that the expansion of the Department's contacts with the media and non-governmental organizations and its use of new information and communications technologies would allow it to reach a much larger audience more effectively. At the same time, the intensive activities of the United Nations information centres and of communications units in United Nations offices at the country level were the most direct means of communication with the world public.

43. United Nations agencies in Moldova, which worked throughout the country, constantly sought to make the local population more aware of the Organization's mandate and activities. In close cooperation with local authorities, United Nations documentation centres had been established in a university and in a city library and a third would open later in the month, with the objective of involving the young people of Moldova and increasing their participation in various United Nations activities. Through the United Nations Journalists' Club, the United Nations resident coordinator's office was cooperating effectively with Moldovan print and electronic media. The Club was using its limited funds very efficiently and was providing opportunities to journalists for professional growth and personal development.

44. The Department of Public Information should reinforce the network of United Nations information centres in order to maximize the impact of public information and should expand cooperation among them locally and regionally. The services provided at the regional and subregional level should be improved; and the centres should also assist the communications units of the United Nations offices in countries where no centres were in place by exchanging experience and best practices, supporting the media and providing training to journalists, representatives of NGOs and civil society.

45. Freedom of expression and freedom of the press were crucially important to all societies and essential to building democracy. His Government strongly opposed efforts to control the media in order to distort or suppress information and influence public opinion and was making every effort to strengthen democratic

institutions, freedom of expression and access to information. Restrictions on the media and on reporters had been eliminated, and journalists had access to Parliament and to Government meetings, documents and officials. Additional steps had been taken to ensure free access for the international media and unhindered reporting and the local mass media had been encouraged to cooperate with the international media Moreover, laws such as the Broadcasting Act were being amended to meet international standards so as to guarantee genuine pluralism and independence of the mass media.

46. *Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) resumed the Chair.*

47. **Mr. Hosseini** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation recognized the significant role of the Department of Public Information in using old and new communication tools to promote global awareness of the Organization's work. The Department must reach out to the widest possible audiences, provide accurate, relevant, impartial, balanced and timely information, promote the Organization's public image by serving as the first source of news for Member States, continue to build on its partnership with the Committee on Information, and take measures to help the developing countries bridge the digital gap. Commending the Department's efforts to address many global issues, he stressed the important role of the United Nations Information Centres and reiterated his delegation's support for multilingualism and linguistic parity in all the Organization's activities.

48. The Department's emphasis on emerging global issues should not deflect its attention from older but vital issues such as the realization of the rights of self-determination and development. In that context the occupation of Palestine and the denial of the Palestinians' right to self-determination were the main reasons for the continued conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Department should address the issue of the gross violation of the human and humanitarian rights of the Palestinian people living under occupation, especially the perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and should endeavour better to inform the public of the negative impact of the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Organization's work to alleviate it.

49. Unfortunately, the media served not only for information-sharing but also as a powerful tool for the advancement of expansionist policies and the promotion of certain cultures with a view to subjugating other nations with different social and cultural backgrounds in a quest for global dominance. The media was widely abused as a tool of cultural and political hegemony and aggressive interventionist policies. It was used to distort reality, manipulate the public and induce them to support recycled or major new lies. The world was currently facing a new type of foreign aggression in the form of a soft war, in which the monopolized army of the media, supported by state-of-the-art technology, attacked its targets with well-crafted news and imposed massive censorship against them, manipulating events to glorify some countries and denigrate others. That undeclared war was undermining the culture and heritage of other nations. The United Nations was subject to the same threat. Nevertheless, the work of peace-loving nations was bearing fruit and people-centred media were attracting new audiences. With the help of the Department, the voice of the victims of the media war could be strengthened. While relying on their own capacities, peace-loving nations needed to promote cooperation among themselves and share information and technical assistance.

50. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that Colombia was fully committed to freedom of the press and freedom of expression and appreciated the work of the Department of Public Information in that regard. She commended the role of the United Nations Information Centres, one of which was located in Colombia. The Bogotá centre purveyed information about the United Nations to the most diverse audiences, especially educational institutions, and its subregional coverage was also substantial. Its activities had been useful in emergency situations, such as the H1N1 influenza outbreak, and it had served as a channel of information on such issues as peacekeeping, climate change, and the promotion of human rights. In that connection, she called attention to the centre's activities to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping operations, with the collaboration of universities and Government departments, which had culminated in the publication of a book entitled *Helmets for Peace*. The centre had also assisted Government departments in publicizing activities relating to the First International Congress on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, recently held in Colombia, and promoting the forthcoming Second Review Conference of the Convention of the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and

on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention), also to be held in Colombia. The centre also collaborated with the Ministry of Education in organizing Model United Nations activities. Noting the adverse impact of budgetary limits on the network of information centres, particularly on their capacity to provide services and information to local communities, her delegation reiterated its appeal that any decision on the reorganization of that network must be taken in consultation with the host countries.

51. Multilingualism must occupy a central place in United Nations efforts to ensure universal access to information on the Organization's work; one essential element was the publication of press releases, which were often available in only one language. Her delegation welcomed the efforts to seek creative channels for the dissemination of news and information about the United Nations; multilingualism must be a fundamental objective in that proposal, so that press releases could be published in all the official languages. Her delegation approved of the thematic approach of the *UN Chronicle*, which had struck a proper balance between information and analysis. However, it was vital that it should be published in all the Organization's official languages.

52. **Mr. Jomaa** (Tunisia) urged the international community to do more to address the issue of the digital divide. Bridging that gap would enable millions of people around the globe to benefit from the many technologies that could assist developing and least developed countries in enhancing their economies and participating actively in the information revolution. The Department of Public Information could play a key role in promoting the international community's awareness of the importance of the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society.

53. The lack of resources invoked in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/262) should not impede the quest for achievement of the goal of parity among the Organization's official languages, a high priority for the Department and for the majority of Member States. Commending the Department's endeavours on the question of Palestine, he encouraged it to pursue its efforts within the framework of the Special Information Programme in order to educate the international community on that important issue.

54. He urged the Department to pursue its efforts to promote the ideals and lofty values of the United Nations. The support of Member States and greater interaction and cooperation between them and the Department were necessary if the latter was to fulfil its sweeping task of ensuring better understanding of the problems and challenges facing the international community in order to achieve the hoped-for results. In that regard, the Committee on Information must constantly monitor the issues on its agenda. Its annual substantive session should be followed by regular consultations with the Department, energizing its work to bring it into line with the needs of a rapidly developing world.

55. **Mr. Liu Yutong** (China) commended the Department of Public Information for its work during the general debate in the General Assembly, the Summit on Climate Change and the Security Council Summit on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament held in September, which had drawn much attention from the media and from people around the world, attesting to the importance that all Governments attached to the Organization. A more balanced and impartial information and communications order would help countries work together to address the challenges. Over the previous year, the Department had disseminated objective, accurate and timely information worldwide, reporting on the Organization's work in various areas and the results achieved. News media, especially the mainstream Western media outlets with international influence, should follow the Department's example of providing accurate information and balanced coverage and should abandon bias and prejudice and refrain from seeking sensational or dramatic effect simply to attract attention. News practitioners should not be opinion leaders or public-opinion shapers, but reliable providers of objective, accurate and timely information, helping their audiences to learn the truth and form their own opinions. It was only by developing a set of professional and ethical codes of conduct and forging an atmosphere of objective and impartial coverage that the news media could play a more effective role and make an indirect contribution to world peace, stability, development and prosperity.

56. Since developing countries formed the majority of Member States, the Department should attach great importance to development, which lay at the heart of all the challenges facing humankind. The Governments of developing countries shouldered the historic

responsibility of developing their economies and improving their people's livelihood. The Department should guide the media and the public, through thematic publicity and information, towards a correct understanding of the issues of development and of their importance, which would help forge common ground for resolving them and prompt the international community to do its best to provide assistance to developing countries. The Department should also continue to promote dialogue and exchanges among civilizations so as to enhance understanding of the diversity of human civilizations and play a constructive role in eradicating religious, racial or cultural bias through information-sharing and dialogue on an equal footing.

57. Efforts should be made to accommodate the special needs of developing countries in gaining access to information. Many developing countries, China included, still largely relied on traditional media. While the developed, and some developing, countries enjoyed the benefits of new information advances, the Department must ensure that the information gap was narrowed rather than broadened and, while strengthening the United Nations website and exploring the use of new websites and tools, must not reduce its input to traditional forms of communication. In addition, emphasis should be placed on the equality of multiple languages, a common aspiration of all countries. He was confident that, even without an increase in the budget, the Department could play a role in that regard.

Draft resolution A on information in the service of humanity, draft resolution B on United Nations public information policies and activities and draft decision on increase in the membership of the Committee on Information (A/63/21, chap. IV)

58. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to take action jointly on draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision.

59. *It was so decided*

60. **The Chairperson** said that, in accordance with the decision the Committee had just taken, he took it that it was prepared to adopt draft resolutions A and B, which had no budget implications, and the draft decision.

61. Draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision were adopted.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/64/SR.11

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 11th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 16 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

Contents

Agenda item 29: Effects of atomic radiation

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

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09-56693 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 29: Effects of atomic radiation (A/64/223)

1. **Mr. Gentner** (Chairman, United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation), accompanying his statement with a computerized slide presentation, recalled that some of the Scientific Committee's major accomplishments had been the production of data that had led to the cessation of atmospheric tests of nuclear weapons, the evaluation of radiation risks, and the compilation of sources of exposure and their magnitude, which had been a major factor in reducing exposure worldwide. Unfortunately, as explained in his letter addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/64/223), owing to unforeseen circumstances, the Committee's fifty-seventh session had had to be rescheduled to April 2010; nevertheless, steps had been taken to mitigate the consequences of the delay and follow up on the matters raised in General Assembly resolution 63/89.

2. With regard to the assessment and review of the effects of ionizing radiation (paras. 5 and 6), the Scientific Committee had issued volumes I and II of its 2006 report in July 2008 and July 2009 respectively, but its 2008 report, which had been approved at the fifty-sixth session, was not yet available. The Committee regretted the delays as its outputs were relied upon as primary sources and scientific data quickly became outdated. Work had begun on six priority topics for the new document cycle, namely assessments of levels of radiation from energy production and the effects on human health and the environment; uncertainty in radiation risk estimation; attribution of health effects due to radiation exposure; updating of the methodology for estimating exposures due to discharges from nuclear installations; summary of radiation effects; and improvement of data collection, analysis and dissemination. Other topics being developed were the biological effects of key internal emitters; medical exposures of patients; enhanced exposures to natural sources of radiation due to human activities; public information; and development of a knowledge base on radiation levels and effects.

3. On the question of data collection and cooperation with other bodies (paras. 8, 9 and 11), he noted that the Scientific Committee cooperated with the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Union and non-governmental organizations in both the collection and dissemination of data. Those bodies attended the Committee's sessions as observers and contributed to discussions. The secretariat was scheduling expert group meetings during the second half of 2009 to determine ways of streamlining the collection of information and data from Member States.

4. With regard to staffing and resources (paras. 13, 15 and 16), he said that the Scientific Committee's work was being hampered by its reliance on a single professional staff member. An additional P-4 post was required and had been recommended for approval by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. United Nations-supplied resources were small compared with the level of contributions-in-kind by members of the Scientific Committee.

5. On membership of the Scientific Committee (paras. 14 and 17), he said that a number of States had expressed interest in becoming members of the Committee. The Committee was developing evaluation criteria which would reflect the candidate's sustainable knowledge in the field of radiation levels and effects and capability to compile, prepare and evaluate scientific reports, assess draft scientific documents and summarize and synthesize the material for the General Assembly, the scientific community and the public; the criteria would also take into account the availability of expert scientists in the fields of the Committee's work, attendance and participation at Committee sessions, contributions to the work of the secretariat and contributions in kind. Those criteria would be applicable, as far as possible, to both existing and future members. While the Committee was not opposed in principle to the admission of new members, it suggested that the maximum number of members should remain more or less unchanged so as not to compromise the Committee's scientific quality, effectiveness or efficiency.

6. In the strategic plan for 2009-2013, the objective was to increase awareness and deepen understanding among authorities, the scientific community and civil society with regard to levels of radiation and related health and environmental effects as a sound basis for informed decision-making on radiation-related issues. The thematic priorities were medical exposures of patients, radiation levels and the effects of energy production, exposure to natural sources and improved

understanding of the effects of low-dose-rate radiation exposure. In order to better meet the needs of Member States, the Scientific Committee would make a number of strategic shifts, including streamlining processes, enhancing data management, improving results-based management and coordination and raising awareness and improving outreach.

7. The unique work performed by the Scientific Committee afforded Member States the truly apolitical, unbiased science that was essential to making informed decisions on nuclear technology, including nuclear power. Regular, scientific and consensual reports were vital to the work of IAEA, WHO, ILO and users in all Member States. Member States should therefore support a membership policy and budget that allowed the Committee to function effectively.

8. **Mr. Windsor** (Australia) asked what support the Committee members could provide to the Scientific Committee and how the review process could be accelerated to respond to emerging issues.

9. **Mr. Gentner** (Chairman, United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation), said that at the review and data input level, institutional support was strong. However, radiation-science centres were not contributing as many consultants as before and the academics who replaced them did not work as quickly as they might. To overcome that problem, the Scientific Committee was adopting a new document cycle to respond more quickly to separate issues instead of producing very long, time-consuming documents; it would also carry out more intersessional work.

10. **Mr. Hemrå** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Serbia; and Armenia and Ukraine, said that the Scientific Committee played an important role in improving international scientific understanding of levels of exposure to ionizing radiation and its health and environmental effects. Its evaluations often underpinned significant actions at the governmental level. One area where further knowledge was required was the effects and risks of chronic low-level exposures on human health and the environment.

11. Given the increasing magnitude, complexity and diversity of the relevant scientific data, the worldwide collection of data on radiation exposure must be streamlined in order to produce high-quality assessments and improve data dissemination. The planned expert group meetings were a positive step in that regard. The European Union reaffirmed its willingness to provide all relevant new information to the Scientific Committee for its consideration.

12. The postponement of its fifty-seventh session illustrated the Scientific Committee's insufficient budgetary and personnel resources. The delay in the issuance of its reports was regrettable and the European Union therefore fully supported the planned expert group meetings intended to help keep the process in motion. The European Union also noted that the need for increased funding had been acknowledged, through the reallocation of existing resources, in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011.

13. The European Union looked forward to an informed early decision on the membership of the Scientific Committee, including the six observers. It also looked forward to the revitalizing of the Committee through the development of criteria that would ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of its work.

14. **Mr. Vidal** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the member States and associated States of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), said that it was regrettable that the shortage of administrative and budgetary resources had caused the postponement of the fifty-seventh session of the Scientific Committee. The MERCOSUR member States and associated States welcomed the possible provision of an additional post to resolve the problem and pledged their support in the General Assembly and, in particular, in the Fifth Committee. They hoped that the Scientific Committee would soon be able to resume its normal pace of work, produce the relevant documents, make up for the time lost and continue to make a valuable and impartial contribution in the field of ionizing radiation.

15. **Ms. Hernández Toledano** (Cuba) reiterated Cuba's firm commitment to the prohibition and total elimination of all nuclear weapons and its complete opposition to the use of nuclear energy for weapons purposes. It was unacceptable that some 26,000 nuclear weapons still existed in the world, over 12,000 of which could be deployed immediately.

16. In view of the importance of the Scientific Committee's work as a source of specialized, balanced and impartial information, its cooperation with Member States and the bodies and agencies of the United Nations

system such as WHO, IAEA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) must be strengthened to assist it in pursuing its goals.

17. Despite its limited resources, Cuba had provided significant assistance to Ukraine to mitigate the effects of the Chernobyl accident. Over the past 16 years, thousands of Ukrainians, mostly children, had been treated in Cuba as part of a rehabilitation programme which, in addition to its humanitarian goals, had had a major scientific impact. Data had been obtained on the internal effects for children in the areas affected by the accident; that information had been disseminated at scientific events and shared with bodies in the United Nations system, including IAEA and the Scientific Committee. The Committee had cited Cuban studies in publications concerning the after-effects of the Chernobyl accident and had expressed interest in obtaining further data from Cuba.

18. She welcomed the fact that the Scientific Committee would be taking a decision regarding its membership at its fifty-seventh session and reiterated that the applications of six candidate countries must be subject to a comprehensive review without delay.

19. **Ms. Kaminaga** (Marshall Islands) said that the particular case of her country, where the population lived with the effects of exposure to multiple nuclear weapons tests, highlighted the urgent need for comprehensive, unbiased and objective scientific understanding of the effects of atomic radiation.

20. While supporting the work of the Scientific Committee, the Marshall Islands wished to draw attention to the need to consider the responsibility of the United Nations and of the former administering Authority, the United States of America, in addressing the effects of atomic radiation in the Islands. The administering Authority had tested 67 large-scale atmospheric nuclear weapons in the Marshall Islands with the explicit approval of the Trusteeship Council. For decades the people of the Islands had spent considerable effort to document the devastating effects of exposure to atomic materials, including through declassified documents detailing deliberate exposure. The effects had continued for generations. Her Government was also concerned about the residual exposure and long-term stewardship of a large concrete storage dome for nuclear material constructed by the administering Authority.

21. Although efforts had been undertaken to remediate environmental damage and to address health and economic issues the response was still incomplete. Science confirmed what the people of the Marshall Islands had long seen for themselves; the United Nations could do much more to facilitate public dissemination and scientific understanding of exposure to atomic radiation for all countries. The scientific definition of safe exposure levels was closely related to the residual fiduciary responsibilities between the United Nations, the former administering Authority and its former Trust Territory, the Marshall Islands; those responsibilities had been reaffirmed in the Communiqué of the Pacific Islands Forum, held in Cairns, Australia, on 5 and 6 August 2009.

22. The international community must show far stronger support for the Scientific Committee, whose work must not be affected by political considerations. Member States should also consider how, within limited resources, the United Nations, and the Scientific Committee in particular, could achieve an improved understanding of the effects of atomic exposure; and should reflect on the United Nations responsibility to the Marshall Islands and facilitate efforts to address compensation and health issues.

23. In view of its remoteness and its limited technical capacity, her Government would welcome assistance in information-sharing and dissemination, including dissemination of the Committee's scientific reports. It would be interested in consultations with the Committee on the preparation of future reports and was willing to provide information relating to the effects of radiation; in view of its limited resources, it hoped that the United Nations would facilitate such efforts. Her Government invited the Committee to visit the Marshall Islands at the earliest opportunity in order to share information and study the effects of atomic radiation.

24. **Mr. Farooq** (Pakistan) said that his delegation believed that the scope of the Scientific Committee's work was only going to increase as new scientific frontiers were explored every day; the promotion of wider knowledge of levels of ionizing radiation and the effects on human beings and the environment was therefore essential. To accomplish that task, the Committee needed the expertise of professionals around the world. Pakistan therefore attached special importance to the issue of the Committee's membership and looked forward to becoming a member, on the merits of its professional expertise in the relevant

disciplines; it was committed to contributing positively to the work of the Committee. It was confident that workable criteria for membership would be formulated during the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly. Restriction of membership was not consistent with the principled decision of the General Assembly on the subject.

25. In view of the Scientific Committee's important mandate, it was imperative that adequate resources should be provided to it. Pakistan was gratified that the problem of staffing of the professional secretariat had been resolved. It hoped that neither the mandate nor the membership of the Committee would be affected by financial issues, especially when the amount needed was not constraining the overall budgetary allocations of the United Nations.

26. **Mr. Shein** (Myanmar) said that the inability of the Scientific Committee to produce its report on time and the postponement of its fifty-seventh session confirmed that reliance by the Committee on a single professional post was insufficient and adversely affected its strategic plan and programme of work. There was clearly a need for the Committee to be supported in a more predictable and sustainable manner. The Secretary-General should consider all options, including the possibility of internal reallocation of staff.

27. His delegation welcomed the convening of expert group meetings to address the future collection of data relating to public, occupational and medical patient exposure and was heartened that the meetings were to be carried out in coordination with relevant international organizations. It believed that the Scientific Committee should hold annual sessions so that its reports could reflect the latest developments and findings in the field of ionizing radiation and thereby provide updated information for dissemination among all States.

28. Funding for the work of the Scientific Committee must be increased, including through the General Trust Fund for Voluntary Contributions in Respect of the United Nations Scientific Committee on Effects of Atomic Radiation established by UNEP. His delegation shared the view that a solution should be found to the financial issue before any discussion took place in the General Assembly regarding the possibility of expanding the membership of the Committee. It also agreed that an increase in the number of members was not necessarily the best solution to the question of its membership. The financial implications of an increase in membership and of the strengthening of the Committee's secretariat were core issues which must be given careful consideration.

29. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) stressed the need for the Scientific Committee to deal with the tasks entrusted to it immediately as well as at its fifty-seventh session, whose rescheduling it welcomed. It hoped that in the meantime every possible step would be taken to increase awareness and understanding on the part of authorities, scientific agencies and civil society of the effects of ionizing radiation on health and environment.

30. His Government's policy was that nuclear technology must be used for peaceful development purposes; moreover, it should not be the object of discrimination, selectiveness or double standards. Syria was therefore concerned about the constraints placed on developing countries' acquisition of nuclear technology for peaceful uses, on the pretext of non-proliferation measures.

31. Syria had always called for the elimination of nuclear arsenals to ward off their hazards and reduce the dangers of atomic radiation. It had been among the first States to call for making the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and had striven to achieve that goal, acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1969 and concluding a comprehensive safeguards agreement with IAEA. It had participated in many initiatives having that objective, including the submission of a related draft resolution to the Security Council in 2003 on behalf of the Arab Group.

32. The fact that Israel was the only country in the region that possessed nuclear weapons, was not subject to international monitoring and refused to accede to the NPT or apply IAEA safeguards undermined regional and world peace and security and could lead to an environmental disaster of gigantic proportions, in addition to unleashing a dangerous arms race and weakening the credibility of international nuclear non-proliferation efforts. An accident of the Chernobyl type could happen to any reactor. The Governments of the surrounding countries therefore had the right to know the nature of the activities going on in those reactors and whether they were safe or not. The absence of any controls or safeguards for Israeli facilities posed a serious threat to neighbouring States

and the rest of the world. The international community must therefore pressure Israel to place its eight nuclear reactors under IAEA supervision, as required by Security Council resolution 487 (1981), and undertake nuclear disarmament.

33. His Government wished once again to remind the international community of the need to deal with the atomic radiation hazard stemming from the burial of nuclear waste in developing countries or in the depths of the oceans and seas, with dire effects on local populations and the marine environment. In that connection, mention must be made of Israel's burying nuclear waste in the occupied Syrian Golan while the world stood by in silence, thus destroying the basis for trust in anything said or written about preventing nuclear proliferation or the need to respect international agreements on nuclear disarmament. Intensive international cooperation was needed to protect human beings from that deadly hazard.

34. **Mr. Bowman** (Canada) said that Canada had participated actively in the work of the Scientific Committee since its inception. The Committee's function in providing authoritative scientific assessments of the sources and effects of atomic radiation had renewed importance given the current renaissance of nuclear energy. The information provided by the Committee was a vital tool that enabled non-governmental organizations, IAEA, Governments and users of nuclear energy to evaluate radiation risk and establish appropriate safety and radiation protection standards.

35. Despite its crucial work, the Scientific Committee had long faced a mismatch between the challenges it faced and the resources it required. Over time, the Committee had gradually lost financial and secretariat resources. Canada hoped that the current situation would soon be remedied and that increased resources would be made available in 2010. The Committee needed adequate staff to provide backup in the case of illness or absence and to enhance the ability of the secretariat to manage its workload, particularly considering how much more information, data and publications now needed to be taken into account given the impact of the Internet on scientific research.

36. Canada agreed that criteria should be developed to evaluate the ability of Member States to contribute to a strengthened Scientific Committee. While the ultimate decision on membership must be taken by all Member States, his delegation believed that the Committee and the secretariat should be consulted on the application of criteria. Canada supported the development of criteria that would apply to all members of the Committee, to ensure that both current and new members contributed fully to its work, and hoped that the criteria would be developed in time to allow for a decision to take place before the Committee's fifty-eighth session. In the meantime, his delegation strongly hoped that the six candidate countries would be invited to attend the fifty-seventh session as observers and looked forward to having them continue to make a positive contribution to the Committee's work.

37. **Mr. Viinanen** (Finland) said that Finland commended the important work of the Scientific Committee, which also played a prominent role in the wider scientific community. Its work was essential to the international radiation protection regime and to Governments and organizations that relied on the Committee's estimates as the scientific basis for evaluating radiation risk and establishing protective measures. It was therefore vital that sufficient resources should be provided to the Committee and that the problem of staffing should be resolved. His delegation was optimistic that a solution would be found during the current session of the General Assembly.

38. The revitalization of the Scientific Committee would ensure that it maintained its dynamism, scientific quality, effectiveness and efficiency in the future. It was therefore important to develop, with the participation of observer members, objective criteria and relevant indicators to be applied equitably to current and future members of the Committee. His delegation looked forward to approval of Finland's full membership of the Scientific Committee during the current session of the General Assembly, once the resource issue had been solved. It believed that a strengthened membership would be conducive to the revitalization of the Committee and that new members would bring an important contribution to the Committee's work.

39. **Mr. Windsor** (Australia) said that Australia strongly supported the work of the Scientific Committee, which had contributed significantly to a better understanding of the effects of ionizing radiation on humans and on other species, how to quantify radiation exposure and how to assess the impact from various exposure pathways. The Committee had started its work in the context of concern over the testing of

nuclear weapons; fortunately, it had moved on since then and its work was now most vital in understanding the risks involved in new technologies. His delegation reaffirmed the Pacific Islands Forum's recognition of the special circumstances of radioactive contamination of the Marshall Islands and the responsibility of the United States of America towards the people of the Islands.

40. Perspective was important when studying chronic, low-level exposures; his delegation noted that the population dose from diagnostic medical procedures had doubled over the past 15 years and, in developed countries, was now equal to exposures from natural sources; and that, worldwide, radiological exposure from diagnostic procedures was a thousand times the exposure from the nuclear fuel cycle, which had implications for finding solutions to climate change issues.

41. The Scientific Committee's operation depended on the large in-kind contribution from Member States, which collectively provided over 100 scientific experts to participate in the annual meetings, at no cost to the wider United Nations membership. For some time the Committee had been severely hampered by having only one professional post in its secretariat; considering also the need to mitigate the effects of postponing the fifty-seventh session, his delegation would welcome an additional professional post as soon as possible.

42. Australia welcomed the presence of observers at the Committee's sessions. It believed that the sole criteria for membership of the Committee should be sustainable knowledge on a broad range of issues in the field of radiation and the ability to compile and evaluate scientific reports, assess draft scientific documents, and summarize and synthesize the material for the General Assembly, the scientific community and the public.

43. **Mr. Zdorov** (Belarus) said that his delegation has consistently called for reform of the United Nations system and enhancement of the effectiveness of its work. A key part of such efforts should be expansion of the membership of the Scientific Committee, which would help to strengthen the Committee as the main independent scientific body of the United Nations in its field.

44. The Scientific Committee's work was largely dependent on the availability of adequate, stable and predictable funding from the United Nations budget as well as the requisite number of staff. His delegation therefore supported the allocation of additional financial resources to expand the Committee. It also stood ready to make a constructive contribution to discussions aimed at ensuring the provision of sufficient financial and human resources to enhance the effectiveness of the Committee's work.

45. Belarus had always supported the work of the Scientific Committee and attached a great deal of importance to its output. The Committee's reports were used in Belarus for the development of national standards to protect the population and the environment from the effects of atomic radiation. As a candidate for membership of the Committee, Belarus was actively involved in its work; it sent scientists to the Committee's meetings and prepared the necessary scientific materials. Acceptance into the Committee would allow Belarus to make the most effective use of its own unique data and significant practical experience in minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster to work with other members of the international community to achieve full implementation of General Assembly resolution 63/89.

46. **Mr. Karitinski** (Ukraine) said that his delegation was pleased that Ukrainian proposals and data had been reflected in the three annexes published by the Scientific Committee in 2009, which showed the increasing attention being paid to occupational exposure, exposure to naturally occurring radioactive materials and new diagnostic procedures.

47. From the outset, the Scientific Committee had been involved in the evaluation of radiation exposure and health effects of the Chernobyl accident and its impact on the health of several generations, not just those people who were living in the vicinity at the time. Ukraine remained ready to continue its active cooperation with the Committee and all parties concerned in order to counter and minimize the consequences of history's worst nuclear accident through a common scientific understanding of its causes. It was desirable for the Committee to continue to be involved in practical activity, particularly in the calculation of collective doses of radiation. That work had started during the preparatory phase of construction of the new confinement of the Chernobyl reactor and would continue for the next 50 months.

48. Although Ukraine had welcomed the invitation to participate as an observer in the work of the Scientific Committee, the limitations associated with the status of

observer had restricted its ability to receive relevant reports and information from the secretariat and contribute to the discussions during the Committee's sessions, not to mention the decision-making process. Ukraine therefore hoped that the General Assembly would approve its full membership, as envisaged in resolution 63/89. Should its membership not be possible at the current stage because of financial constraints, his delegation wished to continue the practice of attending the Committee's sessions as an observer.

49. Despite the current difficulties in the world economy, the Committee must have sufficient funding in 2010 to be able to carry out its work and implement the strategic plan for the period 2009-2013. His delegation supported the redeployment of resources for the biennium 2010-2011 to UNEP, as announced in the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/478); it strongly believed that UNEP should continue to boost allocations for the Committee, since those allocations had been decreasing in real terms over recent years and were not commensurate with its responsibilities and the need to meet the financial and administrative implications of increased membership.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.